

2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)

Workplace Guidance

Frequently Asked Questions



February 10, 2020

Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) is providing these resources specific to management of employees who have returned to Hawaii from travel in areas with known transmission of 2019-nCoV. **For general information about 2019-nCoV, read our [2019-nCoV FAQ](#), and visit our [website for updated information](#).** Many employers and businesses in Hawaii are concerned about the current outbreak of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) and the potential impacts to their business communities and wish to take appropriate steps to mitigate any risks.

Can employees that traveled to China go to work?

As of February 3, 2020, all international travelers are being screened by federal partners at the Daniel K. Inouye International Airport and depending on their level of risk will be either quarantined¹ or on home monitoring² under public health supervision. Travelers subject to home monitoring will be advised when they come through Customs and Border Patrol, and on follow-up by HDOH, not to attend work or school for the duration of their 14 day monitoring period. The volume of travelers from China going forward is expected to be limited given the cancellation of numerous flights and the travel ban for non-United States citizens.

- Employees who traveled to China and are returning to Hawaii ***on or after February 3, 2020***, should not go to work, school, or other public gatherings for at least 14 days after the date they departed China.
- Employees who returned to Hawaii ***before February 3, 2020***, who have been to China within the past 14 days and do not have any symptoms of illness do not have to be restricted from work. They should monitor their health for 14 days from the time they left mainland China. Should they become ill, they should stay home from work and contact their healthcare provider.

The different recommendations reflect when the [White House proclamation](#) restricting travelers that have been to China in the past 14 days went into effect, and the increased risk of transmission of 2019-nCoV in China.

¹ Housed at a designated facility

² Self-isolation at home

Can employees that have family members that traveled to China go to work?

- Employees that are household contacts of returned **asymptomatic** travelers from mainland China are not subject to monitoring and may attend work.
- If an employee has had close contact with a confirmed case of 2019-nCoV infection or a person under investigation for 2019-nCoV (PUI), they should **NOT** be allowed to return to work. There are currently no 2019-nCoV cases or PUIs in Hawaii. If a case or PUI is identified in Hawaii, HDOH will advise close contacts of the case not to attend work.

Employees that are scheduled to go to China, can they still go?

At this time, the U.S. Department of State advises against travel to China

(<https://china.usembassy-china.org.cn/the-u-s-department-of-state-china-travel-advisory-level-4-do-not-travel/>).

Do business events need to be canceled?

At this time, there is no need to cancel business or social events. There are no cases of 2019-nCoV in Hawaii, and there are no restrictions on public gatherings.

Will wearing a mask protect me from the 2019-nCoV?

For healthy people, wearing a face mask is not recommended to prevent infection. The best preventive measures are to wash your hands (especially before touching your face, nose or mouth), cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, limit your contact with sick people, and stay home if sick.

Mask usage in healthcare settings is for specific types of patient contact and masks are worn together with additional types of personal protective equipment.

Is there any specific guidance for janitorial or environmental services staff regarding 2019-nCoV?

For janitorial staff, standard policies regarding protective equipment should be followed; there are no recommendations specific to 2019-nCoV.

Do hospitality industry or airport workers have a higher risk of 2019-nCoV infection?

Other than healthcare workers or people providing healthcare services, there are no classes of workers or industries that are at higher risk than others for 2019-nCoV infection.

How should employers prepare for the potential of 2019-nCoV in their business community?

- People who are sick should stay home from work, school, and other activities to avoid spreading illness. Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
- Develop other flexible leave policies to allow employees to stay home to care for sick family members or for children if schools dismiss students or early childhood programs close.
- Ensure that your leave policies are flexible and non-punitive.
- Remain abreast of current recommendations from CDC, HDOH and your local health department.

What preventive measures should be taken to help reduce the spread of respiratory viruses?

HDOH recommends that employers increase education on respiratory hygiene. The best way to prevent transmission of any respiratory illness (including flu) is to follow everyday preventive actions:

- Get vaccinated against the flu. With current seasonal influenza activity, it is likely there will be confusion as persons with influenza will exhibit similar signs and symptoms such as fever and cough. We strongly recommend residents ages 6 months and older protect themselves against flu by receiving the seasonal influenza vaccination.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, before eating, and after going to the bathroom. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home when sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Cleaning Procedures

Special sanitizing processes beyond routine cleaning is not necessary or recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illness. Businesses should follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product. Typically, this means daily sanitizing of surfaces and objects that are frequently touched.

Other Guidance Documents

- Laboratories
 - [Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines for Handling and Processing Specimens Associated with 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\)](#) (CDC)
- Airlines
 - [Interim Recommendations for Airlines and Airline Crew: Novel Coronavirus in China](#) (CDC)
 - [Interim Health Guidance for Air Carriers and Crews with a Nexus of Operations to China](#) (FAA, CDC)

If you have any questions regarding HDOH's recommendations for work exclusions related to 2019-nCoV, please contact HDOH at one of the numbers below.

Oahu (Disease Reporting Line).....(808) 586-4586
Maui District Health Office..... (808) 984-8213
Kauai District Health Office.....(808) 241-3563
Big Island District Health Office (Hilo).....(808) 933-0912
Big Island District Health Office (Kona).....(808) 322-4877
After hours on Oahu..... (808) 600-3625
After hours on neighbor islands..... (800) 360-2575 (toll free)

For more information, please visit HDOH's Novel Coronavirus webpage at:

<https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/advisories/novel-coronavirus-2019/>

or the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's 2019 Novel Coronavirus website at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.